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SIPDIS

STATE ALSO FOR USOAS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [HA](#)

SUBJECT: LAUNCH OF HAITIAN NATIONAL DIALOGUE

REF: A. PAP 966

[B](#). PAP 446

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: On April 7, Interim President Alexandre formally launched the National Dialogue process. A preparatory committee will, within sixty days, publicize the national dialogue, help the Presidency choose a technical committee and recommend names for a 30-person steering committee. The goal is to create an atmosphere conducive to holding elections, draft a development strategy and strengthen good governance. Political leaders said it was necessary to come together for the future of the nation, but despite efforts by the Government, Lavalas participation in the National Dialogue is uncertain, threatening its value. End Summary.

President Launches National Dialogue

[1](#)2. (U) The much-anticipated launching of Haiti's National Dialogue took place on April 7 (the anniversary of the death of founding father Toussaint Louverture) at a well-attended event held at the National Palace. Political and civil society leaders, the Cabinet, and the diplomatic and international community attended, despite the short notice. President Alexandre told the audience he felt national dialogue was of such importance that he had skipped attending Pope John Paul II's funeral. Alexandre said that the National Dialogue was meant to overcome the divisions and violence endemic in Haitian culture.

[1](#)3. (U) The formal ceremony came on the heels of the Presidential Decree issued April 6 outlining a national dialogue structure that closely tracks with earlier Embassy reporting (ref B). A yet-to-be named 12-person preparatory committee will, within sixty days, publicize the national dialogue, help the Presidency choose a technical committee and recommend names for a 30-person steering committee with President Alexandre as the honorary chair. The short term goal is to create an atmosphere conducive to holding elections, while the medium- to long-term goal is to draft a development strategy and strengthen good governance. The concrete result of the National Dialogue, as stated in the Presidential Decree, is to create a "Pact to Live Together."

Committees Attempt to Be All-Inclusive

[1](#)4. (U) Although the decree did not identify any specific participants, it specified that the 12-member independent preparatory committee will have representatives from the religious sectors (Catholic, Protestant and voodoo), political parties, civil society (including a women's group representative), and from the Executive. The 30-member steering committee will have a representative from each of Haiti's ten Departments, three from the Diaspora (North America, Latin America/Caribbean, and Europe/elsewhere), civil society (rural, women, university, religious and youth), political parties, a representative each from the Council of Eminent Persons (Sages) and judiciary, and two from the Executive. Interestingly, Micha Gaillard, who did much of the ground work with his "reflection group" on national dialogue, told PolOff April 12 that he had not been asked to be on the preparatory committee, but that he may be on the steering committee.

But Lavalas Might Not Participate

[1](#)5. (SBU) Two sectors have already come out against participation: Fanmi Lavalas and the group around Turneb Delpé advocating a "National Sovereign Conference." The sticking point for both is Article 3 of the decree, which states that the national dialogue cannot modify the current Interim Government, the constitution, the elections timetable or the April 4, 2004 Transition Accord.

6, Of the two, Lavalas is by far the more important. The President's office had invited Lavalas moderate leader Yvon Feuille to participate in the preparatory committee (ref A). Feuille first agreed to be a member, but then refused after reading the decree. He publicly announced his objections to Article 3 on the radio. Other Lavalas leaders have echoed

this line, although there has been no formal FL statement.

17. (SBU) Lavalas members Gerard Gilles and Rudy Heriveaux told Ambassador April 13 that they objected to Article 3 because a change of government was essential to create a proper climate for elections, restore neutrality to the government, and show Lavalas partisans that national dialogue would be inclusive. Jean-Claude Desgranges told the Ambassador (in the company of Presidential Chief of Staff Brunache and SRS Valdes), that Article 3 was a "provocation" designed to humiliate Lavalas. Ambassador firmly stated the USG could not support changing the IGOH nor support Lavalas' reasons for boycotting national dialogue. He urged the Lavalas leaders not to make the same mistake they had made last year when the party declined a seat on the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP); it would be excluding itself and could not expect our support. Valdes recalled the history of the anti-Pinochet opposition movement in Chile in the 1980's, which had accepted the Pinochet-written constitution and electoral rules in order to get to an election (which the opposition won). Desgranges said he would "reflect on" the Ambassador's suggestion to find a way to join the National Dialogue while perhaps "reserving" on Article 3.

18. (SBU) In a separate conversation, Gilles told PolCounselor that discussions were still going on inside Lavalas, implying that the initial rejection was not necessarily final. Palace National Dialogue Coordinator Henri D'Orleans told us that talks with Feuille were still occurring, though he insisted that the decree would not be rewritten.

National Sovereign Conference or bust

19. (SBU) Turneb Delpé of the National Democratic Progressive Party (PNDPH), who has long called for a "National Sovereign Conference" to shape Haiti's future, had previously called for changes to the constitution and argued that a dialogue could not be held simultaneously with elections. PolOff met April 12 with PNDPH's J.W. Timothee, who serves as "Executive Secretary of the National Sovereign Conference movement. As in the case of Feuille, Timothee told PolOff he had been invited by the Palace's D'Orleans to be on the preparatory committee but refused after reading the Presidential Decree. Timothee took umbrage with Article 3 and said that without amending the decree, the national dialogue was "bound to fail." He further criticized what he considered the limited scope of the process.

Comment

110. (SBU) National Dialogue can go forward without the relatively small national sovereign conference movement, but a process that does not include Lavalas offers little value given how divided the country is over the movement's legacy and future role. We frankly do not have much patience with the Lavalas objection. Although Lavalas leaders argue principle, we see it much more as reflecting the continuing inability or unwillingness of those who say they want to participate in the process to put their words into action. Thus we are pressing them hard to swallow their objections and walk through the door that is open to them. The IGOH is not likely to change the decree, but the continuing discussions inside Lavalas and between the Palace and Lavalas give us some room to work. We will continue to press both the IGOH and Lavalas to find a way to ensure that Lavalas is included in the national dialogue process.

FOLEY